

Project name:	Zenzo Nkobi Photographic Archive
Date of interview:	7/07/2011
Location of interview:	Bulawayo
Language/s of interview:	English
Length of interview:	1:10:42
Name of Interviewer:	Mary Ndlovu (MN)
Name of interviewee/s:	Dumiso Dabengwa (DD)
Name of translator:	
Name of transcriber:	Mary Ndlovu
Notes on access and use:	
Audio file name/s of interview:	

#### TRANSCRIPTION

Speaker	Dialogue
MN	This is an interview with Dumiso Dabengwa, who has agreed to be interviewed as part of the Zenzo Nkobi Photographic Archive Project. It's conducted on behalf of Mafela Trust and South African History Archive, and it's being conducted by Mary Ndlovu on 7 <sup>th</sup> July 2011 in Bulawayo.
MN	Right, I think to begin with I think you'll tell us a little bit about your background and your role in the struggle.
DD	My name is Dumiso Dabengwa and I joined the struggle when I was almost fresh from school, a few years after school, and I got onto the labour market; I was employed by Barclays Bank, wherein we were the first blacks to be employed by the bank, and it was after my matriculation. We had mainly - 90% of the bank was white people. We had school leavers, our white counterparts who were earning double the salary that we were – they were started at 25 pounds whilst we were started at 12 pounds. We were doing exactly the same work that they were - even had more responsibility than they had. And these are some of the things that sort of made us feel we were being discriminated absolutely because of the colour of our skin, because we were black. And when the NDP was formed we readily joined NDP in order to see to it that we corrected those wrongs. That was the main purpose of my joining the liberation struggle.
MN	At that time you weren't looking ... it wasn't ... you weren't thinking of a military struggle; you were still hoping for a political solution
DD	No we were hoping for a political solution, we were hoping that we would get our

Speaker	Dialogue
	voices heard, and get the leader of the party and others to impress on the colonial government that there was need to change things and make sure that there is equality amongst all of the people of the country.
MN	So that must have been what, 1960?
DD	Yes, that was the beginning of the 60's ... 1960-61
MN	And then, you resurfaced in Zambia
DD	And then, after all efforts had been made during the early 60's, 1960 I would say, ZAPU then came on and each party that emerged was subsequently banned by the government of the day and when finally ZAPU was banned in 1962, the people felt that they would not go on to form any more parties, and ZAPU changed its name to People's Caretaker Council, and people said "We will not form any other party, we are going to fight until we get our independence", and all efforts, in negotiations that had been made had failed and they felt that the only way out was to confront the ... the regime, head on, and I therefore became one of the first groups of young people that were recruited to go and train outside the country and we found our way to Zambia, and from Zambia we were then sent to the Soviet Union for training and completed our training after a year. We came back in 65 and we started forming what was then called ZPRA. We were the first to form a semblance of an army. At that time we actually ... it was referred to as the Special Affairs Department, and not ZPRA, and later we went on to grow it until it became an army, the people's revolutionary army.
MN	And you were intelligence from the ... from your first training?
DD	Yes, I trained in intelligence - I did my basic military training and I trained as an intelligence officer
MN	In the Soviet Union?
DD	In the Soviet Union, yes
MN	OK So then you continued to play that role right through.
DD	I continued to play that role after training from 1965 when we started our first deployment of cadres into the country, up to 1980, when ... the beginning of 1980 when we finally after the Lancaster House talks when we decided, we finally decided we would put down our weapons under the ceasefire arrangement and go into elections.
MN	And you were involved quite a bit in the implementation of that ceasefire
DD	Yes, we were involved in the Lancaster House talks which actually set the roadmap for the ceasefire agreement and we were also charged with the duty of making sure that the ceasefire was implemented throughout the period before the elections.
MN	Was it difficult to convince the cadres in the field that they must put down their arms.
DD	It was difficult to convince the cadres in the field. I think particularly the ZPRA

Speaker	Dialogue
	cadres had started gaining confidence after the bombardments that were done in Zambia and after the clashes that they had had with the Rhodesian forces inside the country and also on the borders with Zambia they had felt confident and they felt that they could really ... to achieve a military victory. And taking into account the ZAPU strategy which was code-named "The Turning Point" which had brought into training regular battalions that were going to come in to support the guerrilla ... the forces that would be advancing into the interior of the country and they would remain holding on to sort of semi-liberated areas and protecting the people that were there and making sure that they create a civil administration in all the areas that would have been captured by ZPRA
MN	If there had been no ceasefire, how long would it have taken to put that plan into operation. It was going to happen that year in 1980, was it?
DD	When the Rhodesians started bombing the ZPRA forces in 1979 and they actually started bombing them when the forces were already being deployed towards the front, that is along the Zambia and Zimbabwe border, and most of the fighting that took place took place really in the border areas and the ZPRA forces were ready to cross. One battalion had already crossed on the western side of the country, yes, between Kazangula and the Victoria Falls
MN	OK How many
DD	They had already crossed. That battalion consisted of about 600 men
MN	600. But they didn't come with heavy weaponry?
DD	They did. The destruction of the ... what do they call it ... the Elephant Hills hotel at Victoria Falls was a result of ... it was hit by the ZPRA forces using artillery fire
MN	OK but I always thought that artillery was from across the river
DD	No no no
MN	It was from within
DD	... this was what the Rhodesians also believed, that they were being hit from across the river, but they were actually hit from
MN	From within
DD	From within
MN	OK then, so then you managed to convince the soldiers to put down their weapons
DD	As I say it was difficult. The ZPRA forces were confident, they had gained strength, and they thought they could really give the Zimbabwean forces a hiding when the ceasefire arrangement was then brokered. And when we got to the camps and told them that it was necessary for them to cease the fighting and congregate at assembly points they were very suspicious about the whole idea and they said "What, we assemble at these places and the Rhodesians come in and attack us what happens, what guarantees are you giving us?" and we said that the guarantee is that you still have your weapons and you fight back

Speaker	Dialogue
MN	So they went there with their weapons.
DD	They went there with their weapons. They only gave away their weapons after the elections at ... when we were doing the integration exercise for those who wanted to join the army
MN	That was after Independence
DD	That was after Independence
MN	The integration began after Independence
DD	After independence, yes
MN	OK Let's go to Independence then, we're going to skip the election itself, but we come to the formation of the government after the election. We know that ZAPU didn't get the majority, it was ZANU, maybe you could just explain how that government was formed then that first government.
DD	Yah, well the first government was formed as a compromise between ZAPU and ZANU, but first let me say that at Lancaster we had agreed that we would go home and we would fight the elections as the Patriotic Front, and not as ZAPU and ZANU and we were told that whilst waiting to register for the elections which other parties were doing, ZAPU was surprised on the final day of the registration when they were told by the Registration Office that they were waiting for them because ZANU had registered to participate in the elections as ZANU PF and what was the position of ZAPU. And we rushed at the last minute to go and register
MN	So ZANU didn't come and say "Look guys, we don't want to go ahead with this?"
DD	No
MN	They just did it behind your back?
DD	They just did it behind. ZAPU was waiting ... we were going to fight those elections as the Patriotic Front. And that is the reason why when ... at a certain stage when ZANU decided to say there were no-go areas, there were certain areas in the country where they would not allow political party to participate in ... and those are the areas where ZANLA forces had had a strong presence. ZAPU believed that that would not be allowed... Nkomo actually made a very strong protest to Lord Soames to say that we can't call that a free and fair election where you have one party refusing people to come and campaign in the areas where their forces are. So this is what happened.
MN	And what did Lord Soames do ...
DD	Lord Soames had promised that those elections - those votes that came from those areas, which is approximately a good 25% of the country
MN	This was mostly in the northern ...
DD	In the east yes in the east, north-eastern and eastern areas. And Lord Soames had promised Nkomo that those elections would not be counted in actual fact, those votes would not be taken into account and he said "Leave them, since they have

Speaker	Dialogue
	refused to abide by the ceasefire arrangement, the rules of the ceasefire arrangement, we are going to make sure that those votes are not brought in”, but after the elections, the polling had stopped, those votes were counted. And the British still called that a free and fair election.
MN	So this business of free and fair elections started way back.
DD	So they actually, they actually taught ZANU PF ... ZANU PF how to rig the elections and how to make sure that the only way you can win an election is by the use of force. So it was two things, two factors: you must use force in order to win an election and two, you must have the tactics of ... of rigging.
MN	Yes. And then, but when the result came out, it proved that ...
DD	When the result came out it was obvious that ZANU would get the majority of the votes, because they already had 25% of the votes guaranteed to them
MN	So you believed that the ...there was collusion then between the British and
DD	There was ... there was certainly collusion, yes
MN	Just to digress for a minute...I don't want to get too far off track but ... did you believe that there was collusion with the British way way back in the 60's, British with ZANU
DD	We believed there was collusion. First I think it is important to realize that ZANU was formed in 1963, and that it was formed at the instigation of a British intelligence agent who told ZANU - Sithole - lies about what he thought Nkomo was trying to do after his visit to Egypt and after his visit to Tanzania – i.e. that he was trying to form a government in exile. And it was that that we understand infuriated Sithole and Sithole as a result of that decided to break away from ZAPU and led people like Robert Mugabe and Enos Nkala out of ZAPU because of that instigation that had been ... that had been made by the British, so it was formed by the British when they realized ZAPU was very strong and that it had united the people of Zimbabwe together under ZAPU and it had become very powerful, and they decided to split it by proposing to Sithole that he breaks off from them, from ZAPU.
DD	And then in 1980 they somehow thought they could have more influence that way.
MN	And then in 1980 when they also realized the game - the South Africans were involved - when they realized that they could not allow a situation where after Zimbabwe has been independent the Zimbabweans are going to be able to assist the ANC MK comrades to use Zimbabweans to launch their attacks into South Africa which was the last bastion of white domination, and they decided they should frustrate that. They brought in the South Africans, and there had to be again a compromise: who of the two parties ZAPU or ZANU will be able to block the MK ANC coming through and who is behind those parties. ZANU - they say “China ah China we don't think it's a problem”.
MN	No problem.
DD	It's not a problem. Who is behind ZAPU - it's the Soviet Union. The Russians have

Speaker	Dialogue
	already gained ground in Angola, which is independent. They have already gained ground in Mozambique, which is also independent. The only obstacle between those two oceans, the Atlantic and the Indian Ocean is Zimbabwe. If Zimbabwe falls under ZAPU the Russians' presence is going to be very strong again. So the Russians have got the whole territory from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean and they will come in and they will just push into South Africa
MN	And the South Africans will be in trouble
DD	And the whole of Southern Africa is going to be under Russian domination. That was the consideration, and of course the South Africans also feared that sort of scenario. So there was collusion.
MN	And did you suspect that the British advised ZANU to contest the election on their own, or that was ZANU's own initiative?
DD	I really never got to know about it, because when we parted at Lancaster it had generally been agreed and in actual fact, we almost at Lancaster decided to choose the Patriotic Front leadership - who would be president, who would be secretary general and so on, but then other people said, "No let's go and do this at home. When we get home let's ... let's choose the Patriotic Front leadership". So we almost were confident it was going to be done. People like Tongogara, the late Tongogara, wanted to make sure that that would be done, because he actually threatened at Lancaster that "If you people go into the country as separate parties after we have agreed on this unity arrangement, and you lose that election we are going to salute Muzorewa if he wins the election"
MN	So there was that feeling that you might not win as a ...
DD	The feeling was that if we came in divided and the people would say - these people have already formed the Patriotic Front, and look at them now they are coming in with their divisions again.
MN	Which of course ....
DD	I mean, Tongogara's position was: you might lose some of the votes in the process and Muzorewa might come up with a ... with a majority, in which case don't expect us in the two forces, ZPRA and ZANLA to fight Muzorewa when he has won.
MN	But then he died ... I mean Tongogara
DD	He never saw it
MN	OK, so then after the election, the government was formed, here it's being sworn in by Banana. Can you explain then why did ZANU bring in ZAPU members into this government? [1E-13-18]
DD	Well, I think it must have been again some advice by some of the people who ... who knew what had happened and who probably wanted to make sure that there was peace, and that it would then be wise instead of leaving ZAPU on their own, it is ...it was important that they should bring ZAPU into a coalition arrangement, so at least they are be there with them and they would be able to monitor them

Speaker	Dialogue
MN	Kind of a co-option.
DD	Yes, but ZAPU can then be monitored. If you don't bring it in, it will be difficult to monitor it. So bring it in so you can be able to monitor it.
MN	OK and, unfortunately this photograph is very dark, but I think ... and it's not really easy to identify the people here. Which of the ZAPU people were there in that first government, do you remember?
DD	There was George Silundika, there was Edward Ndlovu
MN	No Edward wasn't there
DD	In the first one?
MN	No
DD	Oh, he only came later
MN	After unity
DD	There was Silundika, there was ...
MN	Well, Joshua was there.
DD	Joshua, was Chinamano there?
MN	Chinamano must have been, Mchachi was there
DD	Mchachi was there
MN	Yes, I think so
DD	Clement Mchachi, yes Clement Mchachi was there
MN	So there was only about ...
DD	John Nkomo
MN	Was John there, I don't think so ... I think John came after Silundika died
DD	Because ...
MN	I think he replaced Silundika
DD	Because when Nkomo and others were sacked the only one who remained was John Nkomo
MN	Was John
DD	Mchachi left, he said ...he had not been dismissed, but he said "If my leaders are out, I'm also out". John Nkomo remained.
MN	Yes, I think John came after Silundika died. Silundika died and then here this, .... there this is Silundika's burial. [1E-39-09]. I believe he died in 1981.
DD	I think so ... It was 81
MN	And then I think John came then, because I remember there was a discussion then whether Edward was going to take Silundika's position, but John came in.

Speaker	Dialogue
DD	Then John came and took over.
MN	But then even before the death of Silundika, there was - well this is a nice picture there of Ruth [Chinamano] going into parliament [ 1E-14-11] – but then we then had these ... quite early on we had these protests and they're both directed at the same person, this one – I don't know if you can explain a little bit about what was going on here. [1A-37-27]
DD	We had the so-called Entumbane battles. Again this was the mistake that was made by government because they wanted to gain popularity from the population. They allowed that the two guerrilla forces of ZPRA and ZANLA be brought into the two cities of Harare and Bulawayo and had them placed at townships that were next to each other. So at Entumbane, part of Entumbane which had been constructed and which was waiting to be... where people were waiting ... I mean the Council was waiting to allocate to people – was temporarily leased by government so that it could accommodate both the ZANLA and the ZPRA forces, next to each other.
MN	But they weren't integrated yet, they were still separate
DD	They weren't integrated yet, they were separated. There was a fence separating the two cantonment areas where they were placed.
MN	So they were living in those houses.
DD	They were living in those houses, yes and we got the report that one weekend Nkala went there and addressed the ZANLA cadres who were at Entumbane. I don't know on what he was addressing them, but apparently it is ... it is said that during that address he ... he attacked ... rather he made mention of the presence of ZPRA forces there and said some disparaging words about the ZPRA forces and I think he told the ZANLA cadres that they were the ones that had really liberated the country and not that lot under Nkomo. And later on a quarrel arose between a few individuals, and because they had already been incited by Nkala, fighting started.
MN	And, but so this was ...
DD	And people were very angry and they said it was Nkala that incited the fight
MN	So this is what this protest is about.
DD	That's what that protest is about.
MN	Quite imaginative. And then, even this other one is also directed at Nkala. Was... was he particularly prominent at the time? [1E-24-13]
DD	Nkala was quite prominent yes
MN	What was his position?
DD	Just remember, he was very ... he was quite strong. Just remember he had been with Mugabe in detention right through and he had himself ... after they had been freed from detention, he decided to remain, it was decided he should remain in the



Speaker	Dialogue
	country, so he really was a senior person that had remained
MN	Of ZANU
DD	Of ZANU that had remained in the country whilst Mugabe was out.
MN	After they were released from prison. I see, so he was well known in the country.
DD	So he was, yah, he was.
MN	And .. do you recall him speaking about a one-party state at that early period
DD	Yes he was
MN	So he was all out to get ZAPU
DD	This was ZANU's policy - that they must create a one-party state, right from the beginning.
MN	Without saying how they were going to do it.
DD	Yes, but this is why ZAPU had to be contained.
MN	You .. you had a role in that Entumbane fighting I believe.
DD	Yah, we had a role.
MN	What were you able to do about it?
DD	Our role was to put down the fighting
MN	When you say "our" ...
DD	.A number of civilians had died, and Nkomo summoned both myself and Masuku and he said "At all costs this cannot continue, please go and stop that fighting". And we had to intervene and ...
MN	How did you stop them?
DD	...go through crossfire in order to go and stop them. We spoke, we managed to speak ...
MN	You went with Lookout. .
DD	I was
MN	You weren't with the ZANU people. You didn't go with a joint group.
DD	No, no, we went in separate vehicles. We had agreed after we had met, we agreed that the ZANU would go and stop their own people and that we would go and stop our guys. We spoke to them by radio, the commanders by radio and told them that we were coming towards the camp and that they should stop firing at us and we described the sort of vehicle. But there was firing. When we got there the ZANLA guys were firing at our vehicle, because they were the ones who were on the nearer side of the road, yah, but we managed to drive through up to the ZPRA side of the camp and stopped .. stopped them from ...
MN	And the ZANLA guys also managed to stop them

Speaker	Dialogue
DD	The ZANLA subsequently also managed to stop them
MN	How ... were you working well with the ZANLA guys at the top level at that time?
DD	I would say the top level yes we really didn't have much, we didn't have any ... any differences.
MN	So this fighting happened further down the line
DD	Yes, this is why we felt it was Nkala. This is why it was all blamed on Nkala having incited it, and that's what the ZANLA commanders also said. They said you get some of our politicians being very careless in their speeches, and that's what Nkala has done.
MN	But then there was another outbreak in when ... February 81 was it. The second one, where you got guys coming from Gwayi and from Esigodini?
DD	This happened in 81. It was the same incident at Entumbane where after we had managed to stop this and during the time we were trying to stop this fighting... our guys at the assembly camp at Gwayi started coming in with artillery, with heavy weaponry and they were coming to participate on the ZPRA side in that fight, and then the other guys who were at Esigodini also started moving similarly towards the city in order to come and
MN	OK ...to support their comrades there at Entumbane
DD	Yes
MN	But that one, how was it stopped
DD	It was not just against ZANU but the Rhodesians, apparently were also fighting with ZANU they were firing at at
MN	At Entumbane
DD	They were firing at the ZPRA comrades together with ZANLA
MN	How was that stopped then. That was a bit more of a problem, wasn't it with the heavy weapons coming in.
DD	No they did, they were stopped. The ... the guys who were moving in tanks from Esigodini had ... I think two of their tanks blown out by the British.
MN	By BMat
DD	By BMat as they were approaching Bulawayo
MN	OK It was the British, because I read one account that said it was the Rhodesians.
DD	No it was the British, BMatt.
MN	It was the British
DD	No, it was the British B Matt
MN	So that one you weren't as involved in ... that was actually finished by being defeated.

Speaker	Dialogue
DD	Yes, the rest of them turned back.
MN	And the Gwayi ones?
DD	And the Gwayi ones did not come, they stopped 40 kilometers away and they actually went into the ZPRA farm and ... and camped there to see ... after they had been told that they should stop where they were.
MN	Who told them?
DD	We told them to stop This was a unit that was led by Charles Grey.
MN	OK. Now you talked about ZPRA farms. Are you referring to the NITRAM?
DD	NITRAM, yes
MN	OK Can you explain what that was about, because we have a couple of photographs here that show those properties. Can you explain what NITRAM was, what its purpose was, and what it was engaged in?
DD	At Independence, and after we had taken a decision that the integration process would only include the most able soldiers from all the three components, ZPRA, ZANLA and the Rhodesian forces, and that the rest should be demobilized - the Rhodesian ones they would be pensioned off of course - but the ZPRA and ZANLA ones would be demobilized. We had first, as commanders of ZPRA and ZANLA, came out with a plan that was also supported by the Rhodesian forces, that instead of demobilizing these people from the assembly camps where they are and letting them go home, first there was a question of surrendering their weapons. And we said the best way to do it is let us create training programmes, which we called Operation Seed, we said let's create training programmes at places ... at places like Sihlatshani where there is irrigation, there is water; let's have training in agriculture, training, train some of them as builders - into various skills, welders and so on. Let them stay there and only when they have qualified then we can release them and they can go and get jobs as skilled people, and those who want to go and start their own business ventures could then be assisted to start their own business ventures as builders, as carpenters and so on. But at ... we then presented this to government but government rejected our plan and decided they must all just be demobilized.
MN	Just demobilized . So this was 81 then
DD	81 yes. And on the ZPRA side we sat down and discussed this, after government had rejected the plan. We said "We are going to have problems. We're going to have some of our comrades who really cannot be able to make ends meet and unless something is done to take care of them ... we have some of them who are still psychological cases who need counselling, who need to be guided through. There is no way you can pay them the money and they go to the bar and drink it off or something like that. And wait for the next month when they get their demobilization. This is what some of them are going to do. So let us look at how best, at a programme where we can be able to assist our comrades". And we then came out with the NITRAM plan which was a company that we formed in order to

Speaker	Dialogue
	create job opportunities for all the ZPRA cadres who needed to be assisted. And it was in farming, in farming, and we were going to do a number of things at our farms ...
MN	These animals are beautiful [1E-28-01]
DD	And skills and so on. Yes, and that was the ... our project. And we bought a number of farms. These were contributions that came from the cadres
MN	From their demob
DD	Yes from their demob pay, yes, Not just from their demob pay. Those who remained in the ... in the army also contributed
MN	Oh they did?
DD	Yes, all the ZPRA cadres had to contribute towards this. And it is that, those funds that helped us to buy these farms, and the idea was to create those job opportunities.
MN	I'm not sure which farm this is, but there were several weren't there.
DD	This looks like Ascot to me, which is on the Khami Road. If it's not Ascot then it is the one in Gweru, the one in Gweru.
MN	OK And then this was one of the other properties. [1E-37-03]
DD	Yes, Castle Arms, which is in one of the Bulawayo suburbs was a place which we also bought and we had started improving it, developing it. I actually got married at this place .. and this was supposed to be an entertainment area.
MN	Was it also a hotel or it was just ...
DD	Yes
MN	It was ...And then what happened?
DD	When ZAPU ... when the ZAPU leadership after the quarrel in 1982 and when Nkomo was chucked out of government ..
MN	Maybe you could just give the background of that
DD	Well, there were allegations that ZPRA had cached weapons in some of their properties and some of their farms, namely the Ascot Farm, Woody Glen Farm and the farm in Gwelo ... that we had cached weapons there ... we had cached weapons there and we got arrested ... myself, Lookout and a number of other ZPRA commanders who were said to have been plotting to overthrow the Mugabe government were arrested. Nkomo was chucked out of government, thus ending the coalition government, and all the properties, the ZPRA properties, all the ZAPU properties were then confiscated because they belonged to an organization that was planning a coup in the country and Enos Nkala was then Minister of Home Affairs and all the properties were, were just confiscated. Later on, we understand, most of them were then auctioned out at give-away prices.
MN	But was this a legal thing?

Speaker	Dialogue
DD	At the farm in Gweru we had approximately 4,000 plus cattle and all of them just disappeared. All the equipment we had, the tractors etc etc. Nest Egg Farm had chickens, up to about 10,000 plus chickens, and pigs ...
MN	Who took over, I mean initially when they confiscated them, did the police move in or ...
DD	The army, in most of the places the army moved in, so that we lost, NITRAM lost almost everything, all the movable assets that were ...
MN	And Castle Arms, it was just left to deteriorate
DD	Castle Arms was made ... it was also vandalized and so on. Later on it was given to the Ministry of Education under Fay Chung. They used it for about a year or two I don't know exactly for what purposes
MN	So you were locked up, Nkomo was thrown out of government, and having been locked up then you were tried.
DD	We went to trial, yes, and it was proved in court, we proved in court that there was never anything like a coup plot at all, it was an imagination that had been coined by both Mnangagwa, and the Rhodesian forces and South Africa because they wanted to destabilize the country. The court finally found us not guilty and .. but we were still detained.
MN	You were charged with treason.
DD	For four years. We were charged with treason, yes. We were released after four years, in my case, four years, ten months.
MN	And then, the other photographs we have here first of all there's these -[1E-35-04, 1E-35-29] while you were in detention, other things were going on then. You were detained in 82
DD	We were detained in 82 and
MN	Early 82
DD	Early 82 yes and
MN	And then, the other element of this breakdown ....
DD	Whilst we were detained as I say, a number of things ... there were a number of developments in the army. ZPRA cadres were all accused of being enemies of the state, they were not to be trusted, even those that had been ... that had been commissioned into officer ranks they were not being trusted, and from time to time they would be arrested and locked up and tortured to reveal exactly what plots they had against the government, and a number of cadres, ZPRA cadres, especially the junior ones, were just really ill-treated deliberately and frustrated. A number of them decided to leave the army. We understand that few of those that had left the army decided that they were not just going to leave the army, they were going to fight back. So they organized weapons and they started fighting back.
MN	Were... were there different elements then, or were some of them just more on the

Speaker	Dialogue
	banditry side, while others were actually trying to fight against the government. How do you see this whole so-called dissident ...
DD	Yes, of the characters that we got to know of after the amnesty ... those that were not killed during the clashes with the, with the Zimbabwean forces... We noticed that some of them were just of banditry character; and they took advantage of that and they wanted to continue some of the banditry activities they had wanted to do during the war
MN	But some of them were probably involved that way before ...
DD	And but there were others we genuinely felt, we think, that they needed to do something. We think they said "Our leaders have been detained in prison, we can't just fold our arms and leave them there; let's do something about it" But all in all it was a small group. I mean when the amnesty was then declared it turned out less than a hundred
MN	Yes, so few, but maybe what we maybe have left out is what the government response was to these, these so-called dissidents..
DD	Well, the government response ... after these so-called dissidents had come out and had started operating.
MN	What kind of activities were the dissidents, for want of a better word, what were they undertaking in terms of ... you said fighting back ... what were they actually doing
DD	Well, I don't know, but we understand, except for incidents like the tourists that were shot dead on the Falls road, and it is alleged, that it was those dissidents, the ZPRA dissidents, who shot them and that was one. Other activities we understand was the destruction of government equipment, like dam-building equipment in Matabeleland and other areas like that and this is why government took the attitude that if this is what you are doing in Matabeleland, then Matabeleland will not be developed, there will be no development in Matabeleland because ...and they found an excuse, because of the security situation and they made sure that they stopped developing Matabeleland because under that excuse. Then of course we also came to know that a number of other incidents were being perpetrated by the Zimbabwean forces themselves. People who were masquerading as dissidents and who went around and killing people and saying they were ZPRA dissidents
MN	When they weren't
DD	When they weren't - in order to give the government an excuse to continue killing people in Matabeleland
MN	Ok and then maybe you could just say something about this killing of people in Matabeleland, which is ... and the burning of villages and so on. [1E-35-04] and [1E-35-29]
DD	Well the whole idea really was to get rid of ZAPU – not just the people, anyone who was ZAPU and as far as government was concerned everyone in Matabeleland

Speaker	Dialogue
	was ZAPU and therefore people had to be killed and be taught a lesson so that those that remain can never again support any other party than the ruling party ZANU PF.
MN	And this is typical of ...[photos]
DD	That was the lesson to be taught.
MN	Did you ... were you aware of this when you were in prison, because you were locked up during this time, but you were getting news
DD	Oh yes, we were getting feedbacks from various people from some of the guards and from some of the people who were being arrested and were brought in to be locked in
MN	They were telling you what was going on. OK it must have been very painful for you sitting there.
DD	Yah, you can't do anything about it.
MN	Yes. And then maybe we can ... but then the ... the election in 1985 showed that people in Matabeleland didn't learn the lesson that they were being taught.
DD	No, no
MN	Then maybe we can just ... you could talk for a minute about Lookout and what happened, who was your comrade in prison there as well as before.
DD	Yes. Well it was very painful to lose Lookout Masuku. I had known him for a long time. I taught him at Cyrene mission in Standard 4 and after that we didn't see each other. We then met in Zambia when we both were joining the liberation struggle and we worked together all that time. We got locked up together under the treason charges that were alleged against us and we ... our consciences were very clear. The four years in prison together resolved our determination not to give in to the intimidation by ZANU PF. First, we were able to dismiss the charges that were brought against us and show that they were nothing else than a figment of their own imagination with an excuse to ... to destroy ZAPU. We had known it because at one time it came out very clearly that we were a threat because of the backing that we had from the Russians. We were a threat to the government of Zimbabwe, and that remained the case right through, and we knew that was the whole reason we were being persecuted in the manner we were being.
MN	Did, did you think that they really thought you were a threat or it was just some obsession with controlling everybody?
DD	They did think we were a threat. Even the British and the South Africans thought we were a threat. They did not believe that Nkomo's acceptance, final acceptance of ... of the result of that election was genuine and that ZAPU had some scheme that they would undertake, and they really believed that we were going to ... that we had something [inaudible] and they believed that we were a threat indeed
MN	So they had to take that chance

Speaker	Dialogue
DD	Yes Minister Zvobgo who was Minister of Justice when he came to visit us in prison.
MN	Oh he came to see you in prison
DD	Yes, he was the first one to come to prison, not long after we had been at Chikurubi, even before our trial, and even before we got ... before the trial was over he came and he said to the officer in charge. "Please, look after these people. These are our best military commanders, most experienced. They have done no crime ..."
MN	He actually said that to you
DD	...their only crime is that we fear them"
MN	He said that ..
DD	Yes. ... "so don't ill treat them, they have no crime, keep them.. the state wants them here to make sure that they are not a threat, that's all"
MN	What an admission. And yet it was his ministry that was prosecuting you
DD	Yah, no, no, Justice doesn't
MN	The Attorney General
DD	Well, the Attorney General. When the case is brought to them by the police, state security they, they can't say no
MN	They can't say no. Honestly that's an admission.
DD	They administer justice
MN	But were you together, in prison then, were you together in the cell with, with Lookout?
DD	We were together in the cell all the time.
MN	Just the two of you, or were there others as well.
DD	No, there were times when we had over a hundred of us.
MN	In one cell
DD	No there were actually two big cells for detainees. These were detainees and not prisoners.
MN	OK
DD	And we started classes
MN	But, but at first you were ... you were detained as suspects, isn't it.
DD	We were detained as suspects
MN	Then after your trial, you were then just detained
DD	Then after our trial we were just detainees



MN	So was you, were you conditions then different in prison, after the trial
DD	I beg your pardon, it was after the trial when Zvobgo came, it was after the trial
MN	Oh OK
DD	... when he said “They have committed no crime, even the courts have determined so”; it was after the trial, I beg your pardon. Yeah, there was a time when the cells accommodated quite a number of us. We had double beds and we had some people sleeping at the top. The cell would be about forty, forty or so and as I say we started classes, we... we had had some of the colleagues who came there who were completely illiterate and by the time they left prison they were able to read a newspaper and understand it..
MN	Yes, prison becomes a school. And then Lookout became ill.
DD	Lookout became ill. We had a prison doctor who was not very good, who was not good at all really and he continued treating Masuku for something ... an ailment that he did not have; he couldn't diagnose the meningitis that he had and when he did so it was too late.
MN	So this funeral .... he actually ... you were still in prison then
DD	I was still in prison.
MN	But he didn't die in prison ... he had been sort of released
DD	Not really released; he was taken to hospital, I think a week before he died and that's where the meningitis was then diagnosed
MN	That's where it was diagnosed it
DD	But as I say it was late; they started treating him, but he didn't respond. I applied to be let out to go and attend the funeral but that was refused.
MN	It was refused. Even that you were going to be too dangerous.
DD	I was still dangerous, even to attend a funeral. [1E-47-10]
MN	But by this time now, after he ... after he died, this .. this photograph is taken I think a year later probably, some time later anyway, at the unveiling of his tombstone. By this time you had been released [1E-46-08, 1E-46-15]
DD	I had been released, yes.
MN	What had changed then, to allow you to be released now?
DD	Nothing.. had changed, except that ZAPU had agreed to go into the Unity Accord <sup>1</sup> with ZANU PF and agreed that its structures would integrate with the ZANU structures to form the one party ZANU PF; that was the change. I did not like the idea, I would not have wanted to join ZANU PF in actual fact. I had refused when I was in prison. One day when I was approached by Mnangagwa, Nkala - who was the third one - I think Zvobgo, I'm not quite sure. The three ministers came to see me, that was after Masuku's death, and they said “No, no, you can get released. All

<sup>1</sup> The agreement actually came only a year later, but negotiations were already under way.

	that you have got to do is join ZANU PF”.
MN	As an individual
DD	As an individual. And I said “Over my dead body, I’d never do it. Not after all these Gukurahundi massacres that you people have been carrying out on our people in Matabeleland. I’d never join ZANU PF”. So when I came out and I found that there were negotiations to go into this unity accord, I was very critical of it. Nkomo had called me, and he wanted me to participate in the integration of the structures and I turned it down and said I wouldn’t ... I wouldn’t want to be associated with ZANU PF at all. But Nkomo then went on to explain to me the need for peace, the need to reconcile and so on and that we were dealing with people who can never be left alone and that the best thing was to come in and try and restrain them from doing what they would otherwise do to our people from inside. So after that persuasion I finally agreed to .. to assist because he said “If you don’t .. people are looking at you, and if you don’t come forward, there’s going to be resistance”.
MN	But I mean ... now the younger generation are looking on that whole unity accord very critically and probably they don’t see how things looked at the time, but what do you think now in hindsight? Was it the only possible move for ZAPU at that time or was it a mistake?
DD	I can understand .... it’s difficult to say it was a mistake. I can understand Nkomo’s feelings. Reading of this story of his life and the way he left, went through Botswana and finally got to Britain and talked to the British and said “There you are, here there’s your person” and the British wouldn’t listen and finally they said “Ya, we’ll talk to Mugabe, you go back there and you’ll be able to work out something with him.” The frustration that he had... He comes back home, and he finds these things are still happening and he knew exactly what ZANU was capable of doing, with the experience that we had during the liberation struggle, and his concern was “Do we allow our people to continue to be killed and disseminated in the manner they are. How do we stop it?” ... like the story he gave, he said, “You know it’s like you have a madman and who is wielding an axe and he wants to kill people and you go and confront him straight on like that. He’ll manage to chop about three or four of you’s heads off but finally you’ll be able to overcome him. Is that what we should do or shouldn’t we try and settle that person and finally hold his hands and stop him from doing it”. So he ... I understand, I understand, I understand the feeling that he had. Even Joseph Msika was telling me that he had a similar argument with him, he wouldn’t ... he said “Not ZANU PF, I will not join ZANU PF”. But Nkomo persisted “We’ve got to save this nation, we’ve got to save our people. If we don’t do that these young men, the so-called dissidents who are out in the bush are going to continue. We’re going to have a similar situation as in Mozambique, with UNITA, -I beg your pardon - with Renamo, we’re going to have a similar situation we had in Angola with UNITA, and where does it end up? The British are going to fold their arms ‘We gave them their Independence. It’s not our fault”. But the losses of life that are going to take place they are going to be blamed on us. We have to find a way of ending that”. And one can understand the feelings of the frustrated old man.



